

Testimony

Presented to the Michigan House Committee on Great Lakes and Environment
Regarding HB 4579

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I was pleased to have served on a working group formed by the Senate Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs Committee in the spring of 2004 that was charged with drafting Michigan's first aquatic invasive species bill. I was honored to have been given the primary responsibility for creating the list of invasive aquatic species that were considered in the tie-barred bills that were signed into law later that year. I have attached a copy of an updated list of species that was used in that working group. We recognized that any list would need to be updated as time passed, and I am grateful that this committee has undertaken this revision of the listed species. Two species of considerable concern have been found in Michigan since the original list was compiled. These species should be included in this list to provide the necessary protections to Michigan surface waters.

Starry Stonewort: Starry stonewort (*Nitellopsis obtusa*) is a large algae species that looks like a "higher plant". It is of European origin and was first found in North America in Lake St. Clair. I was the first person to positively identify starry stonewort in a Michigan inland lake in 2006, after being alerted to its presence in New York by a colleague at Cornell University. It has rapidly spread to lakes from Ludington to Oakland County. This plant is capable of blanketing the bottom with dense pillows of vegetation that crowd out all other species, including other exotic invasive species. The outcome of uncontrolled spread of this plant is a drastic reduction in plant biodiversity and tragic loss of spawning habitats for lake fisheries. The impact of this plant on recreation is catastrophic. No aquatic plant in Michigan will stop a boat as effectively as starry stonewort. Starry stonewort is the most aggressive aquatic plant I have seen in nearly 30 years of work with Michigan lake communities and aquatic plant management research. At this point in our understanding, starry stonewort may represent a greater threat to Michigan lakes than any other historical or pollution event. The impact on lake ecosystems and recreation cannot be underestimated. The State of New York has already listed the plant as an invasive species and I am aware that other Great Lake States are taking action to list this species on their invasive species list.

Cylindro: Cylindro (*Cylindrospermopsis raciborskii*) is a microscopic blue green algae (cyanobacteria) that is not native to North America. It was first found in the Southeastern United States and appears to have moved northward. It is one of the blue green algae that is capable of secreting toxins. It was implicated in the deaths of several persons in Florida when water that was contaminated with cylindro toxin Cylindrospermopsin was used in a dialysis center. It has also made headlines in Indiana where it has been found in numerous lakes resulting in the closure of those lakes for swimming and use as potable water sources (see attached paper by Jones et al.). Researchers reported cylindro in two Michigan Western Michigan Lakes in 2006 (see attached). I discovered cylindro in Kent Lake on the Huron River, Oakland County, in 2007. Washtenaw County has developed a research proposal that was submitted to the MI DEQ this spring to provide the means to monitor the lakes in that county for the presence of cylindro and its toxins. This was done as a collaborative effort between Washtenaw County, Lake Superior State University Researchers, the Huron Clinton Metropolitan Authority, and Aquest Corporation.

Designation as an invasive species should help to elevate state wide recognition of these species as a threat to recreation, public health, and aquatic ecosystem integrity. It should also help regulators to take appropriate actions for the control of these species. Please consider the inclusion of these three species on the list of species included in HB 4579.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Attachments:

Invasive Aquatic Plant Species List, Updated
Jones et. al.
Cylindro in Michigan Lakes
Starry Stonewort Draft Monograph